

had once been a priest somewhere in the North, but finally became an agitator in London and its neighbourhood, where Sudbury, first as Bishop of London, and then as Metropolitan had repeatedly to adopt repressive measures against him.¹

* He was accustomed,' says Froissart, ' every Sunday after Mass, as the people were coming out of the church, to preach to them in the market-place and assemble a crowd around him, to whom he would say, " My good friends, things cannot go well in England, nor ever will until everything shall be in common; when there shall be neither vassal nor lord and all distinctions levelled, when the lords shall be no more masters than ourselves. How ill have they used us ? And for what reason do they thus hold us in bondage ? Are we not *all* descended from the same parents, Adam and Eve ? And what can they show or what reasons give, why they should be more masters than ourselves ? except perhaps in making us labour and work for them to spend. They are clothed in velvets and rich stuffs, ornamented with ermine and other furs, while we are forced to wear poor cloth. They have handsome seats and manors, when we must brave the wind and ram in our labours in the field; but it is from our labour they have wherewith to support their pomp. We are called slaves, and if we do not perform our services we are beaten." ' ² Such, in spirit, was John Ball's agitation. But the report is that of a prejudiced person in full sympathy with the upper classes, and shocked by the startling horrors of the Rising. It may be questioned how much stress was really laid by the agitators on the project of * having all things in common.' When the Rising took place, no such request was put forward. Personal freedom, and the commutation of all services for a rent of 4cZ. an acre, were the very practical demands then made. When this had been granted, most of the rebels went home ; even those who stayed, produced no scheme of speculative communism, but confined their further demands, at most, to disendowment of the Church, free use of forests, abolition of game-laws and of outlawry.³ The attempt to picture the Rising as a communistic movement ignores the plainest facts. It was, as far as the bulk of the peasantry was concerned, a rising to

¹ *MS. Lambeth Register*, Sudbury, 30 6.
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² Froissart ii

³ H. B. 519, Knighton, ii. 137.